

True Worship of God

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How to Give God Our True Worship

- Besides all the other biblical counsel, there are two primary ways we can discover how we should worship God corporately (publicly as a group):
 - Look at how the Bible describes heavenly worship of God
 - Look at how the Bible describes earthly worship of God by His people (especially in the sanctuary/temple services)

Doing What Pleases God (Worship is Focused on God; not Man)

- “For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light:⁹(For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;)¹⁰Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.¹¹ And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.” Ephesians 5:8-11. This undercuts the popular contemporary idea that “if it ‘blesses’ me, then it must be right.” This is actually a Christianized version of, “if it feels good, it must be right.” Our text tells us that *God* decides what is right in worship, not *us*.
- “Always be trying to find out what best pleases the Lord.” Eph 5:10 (*Twentieth Century*).

True Worshippers

- “But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” John 4:23-24.

Heavenly Worship

- Revelation 4 (especially vv. 8-11); Revelation 5:8-14. Sense of awe, respect, and reverence.
- Isaiah 6:1-8 provides the basis of our attitude when we come to worship God
 - We recognize God’s infinite greatness, His holiness and purity, His grandeur. We are in awe. There is a sense that His truth is supreme over all human wisdom.
 - We recognize and are seized with the consciousness of our sin, our dismal record, our weakness, our failures as sinful humans. We confess that we are sinners doomed to destruction. There is no room for a humanistic self-glorification. There is not even a hint of the celebration of our greatness, or power, or abilities.
 - There is cleansing, repentance, transformation.
 - There is forgiveness. God receives, forgives and cleanses us.
 - There is a commission and call to sacrificial service
 - We obey and respond to God’s call, “Here I am. Send me!”

So, here are some points to take from this passage:

- God’s holiness is exalted
- There is great reverence toward God
- Sin is exposed and shown to be greatly evil
- Worshipers confess and repent
- God offers forgiveness and cleansing
- God calls for service (obedience) to Him and to others
- The cleansed sinner (now a saint) joyfully responds

More points...

- This is no exuberant celebration service
- No hint of worldliness
- No hint of trying to be “relevant” or “seeker-sensitive” to win carnal minds
- God is not portrayed as your buddy or “the good guy upstairs”
- God is not someone we use to achieve our goals (happiness, riches, long life, etc.)
- Human felt needs are not the center of attention in this passage. Instead sin is exposed as the root problem behind human needs. The solution is to be cleansed of sin.

This is important because the contemporary church movement of today says that we should concentrate on human felt needs (desire to be accepted, good self-esteem, health, happiness, sense of fulfillment in this life, good marriages, success in our careers, becoming wealthy, etc.). Note, that many of these items are fine; however, when we put them first and foremost, then we lose our perspective. God becomes a means to achieve *our* goals in this life, instead of God using us to achieve *His* goals. This is a rather subtle issue; nevertheless, it is very important. The verse below sheds some light on this:

“But seek ye **first** the kingdom of God, **and** his **righteousness**; and all these things shall be added unto you.” Matthew 6:33.

Does God Care How We Worship Him?

“When the LORD thy God shall cut off the nations from before thee, whither thou goest to possess them, and thou succeedest them, and dwellest in their land; ³⁰ Take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them, after that they be destroyed from before thee; and that thou enquire not after their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their gods? even so will I do likewise. ³¹ Thou shalt not do so unto the LORD thy God.” Deuteronomy 12:29-31.

“You must not worship the LORD your God in their way.” Deuteronomy 12:4 (NIV).

I [God] hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. ²² Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, **I will not accept them:** neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. ²³ Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols.” Amos 5:21-23.

The story of Cain and Abel is the first example of false worship in the Bible. Cain brought his best with apparently good motives. Abel brought his best with apparently good motives. Both were worshiping God. Both brought a sacrifice to God. One was accepted, the other was not accepted by God. God was very particular. Genesis 4:2-8.

In the sanctuary service, only the Levites were allowed to lead in the singing. “Now the Levites were numbered... four thousand were porters; and four thousand praised the LORD with the instruments which I made, said David, to praise therewith.” 1 Chronicles 23:3, 5.

Only certain musical instruments allowed in the sanctuary service. Also, note that the musicians were under the tutelage of their father.

“All these were under the hands of their father for song in the house of the LORD, with **cymbals, psalteries, and harps**, for the service of the house of God.” 1 Chronicles 25:6.

The sanctuary musicians were employed full time.

“And these are the singers, chief of the fathers of the Levites, who remaining in the chambers were free: for they were employed in that work day and night.” 1 Chronicles 9:33.

“Moreover David and the captains of the host separated to the service of the sons of Asaph, and of Heman, and of Jeduthun, who should prophesy with **harps**, with **psalteries**, and with **cymbals**.” 1 Chronicles 25:1.

Was this by the command of God?

“And he set the Levites in the house of the LORD with cymbals, with psalteries, and with harps, according to the commandment of David, and of Gad the king’s seer, and Nathan the prophet: for so was the commandment of the LORD by his prophets.” 2 Chronicles 29:25.

The point here is not that we should use only Levites to lead in our worship services. The point is God is very particular about how we worship Him. Apparent sincerity is not enough, if God has given us counsel that we are ignoring.

Some Texts on Worship

- True worshippers of God will ask, “...Who is able to stand before this holy LORD God?...” 1 Samuel 6:20.
- No wonder that in the First Angel’s message, it says to, “...Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.” Revelation 14:7. Fear = reverence, respect.
- “But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in **all** manner of conversation [all that you do].” 1 Peter 1:15.
- “Be silent, O all flesh, before the LORD: for he is raised up out of his holy habitation.” Zechariah 2:13. “But the LORD is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him.” Habakkuk 2:20.
- “Whatsoever ye do, do **all** to the glory of God.” 1 Cor. 10:31.
- “Let **all** things be done decently and in order.” 1 Cor. 14:40.
- “For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.” 1 Cor. 14:33.
- “But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of **a meek and quiet spirit**, which is in the sight of God of great price.” 1 Peter 3:4.
- “And after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire: and after the fire **a still small voice.**” 1 Kings 19:12.

Holy Spirit Leads to Truth (not just a charismatic experience)

- “And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.” 1 John 2:3-4.
- “We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the **spirit of truth**, and the **spirit of error.**” 1 John 4:6.
- “Howbeit when he, the **Spirit of truth**, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come.” John 16:13.
- “If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the **Spirit of truth**; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.” John 14:15-17.
- “And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD. And, behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD; but the LORD was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the LORD was not in the earthquake: ¹² And after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire: and after the fire **a still small voice.** ¹³ And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. And, behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah?” 1 Kings 19:11-13.
- “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.” Isaiah 8:20. The law is the torah (first five books of the Bible); the testimony is the testimony of the prophets (Revelation 19:10).

Called to a Decision

- “And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.” 1 John 3:22. Our worship must be in keeping with God’s Word, not simply in what is “blessing” us (or what we *think* is blessing us).
- “And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him.” John 8:29.
- “Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.” Matt 7:14. What is popular in music and worship, might not be approved by God.
- “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.” Luke 9:23.
- “Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.” Luke 14:33. We are called to forsake our own tastes in music if it conflicts with God’s principles.

Worship is not a selfish act. We do not come to worship to see how much we can get out of it. *Our* criteria for worship are not the issue. *God’s* worship plan is the one to be followed – *AFTER ALL, HE IS GOD.*

We come to worship God on *His* terms. As a result of obedience to God’s plan, and a realization of His awesome power and supreme Godhead, we are humbled, yet stirred to holy joy and praise. As a result, we receive a blessing that is beyond mere emotionalism and seasonal excitement.

Conduct of Pastor, Elders, Deacons, Deaconesses (Suggests how we are to approach God in worship)

² A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, **sober**, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach; ³ Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; ⁴ One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; ⁵ (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?) ⁶ Not a novice [one newly come to the faith], lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. ⁷ Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

⁸ Likewise must the deacons be **grave**, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; ⁹ Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. ¹⁰ And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless. ¹¹ Even so must their wives be **grave**, not slanderers, **sober**, faithful in all things. ¹² Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. ¹³ For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.” 1 Timothy 3:2-13.

For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; ⁸ But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, **sober**, just, **holy**, **temperate**; ⁹ Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. Titus 1:7-9.

Issue of Applause versus “Amen”

“And let all the people say, Amen.” Deut 27:15-26.

“Blessed be the LORD God of Israel for ever and ever. And all the people said, **Amen**, and praised the LORD.” 1 Chronicles 16:36.

“Blessed be the LORD God of Israel from everlasting, and to everlasting. **Amen**, and **Amen**.” Psalms 41:13.

“Blessed be the LORD God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting: and let all the people say, Amen. Praise ye the LORD.” Psalms 106:48.

“What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also. Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say **Amen** at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?” 1 Corinthians 14:15-16.

“And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the **Amen**, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God.” Revelation 3:14. “Amen” is another name for Christ.

“And the four beasts said, **Amen**. And the four and twenty elders fell down and **worshipped** him that liveth for ever and ever.” Revelation 5:14.

“And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and **worshipped** God, Saying, **Amen**: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. **Amen**.” Revelation 7:11-12. 144,000.

“And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, **Amen**; Alleluia.” Revelation 19:4.

Battle Within God’s Church

Next we turn to the battle between good and evil within God’s church. Our goal is to see how the issue of worship relates to this battle.

- God’s church (His people) are the target of Satan’s attack. The battle between good and evil rages *within* the church.
- Revelation 12 gives a high-level picture of the great controversy between Christ and Satan.
 - Verse 4 describes how Satan deceived 1/3 of the angels at the very beginning of the war in heaven (also alluded to in verse 7).
 - Verse six provides the 1,260 year prophecy (one place out of seven that this prophecy is referred to in the Bible).
 - Verse 17 describes the final acts of the war before probation closes at the end of time.
 - A main theme found in this chapter is the woman which represents God’s true people, His church.

Revelation 12:12-13, 17

“Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time. And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman [God’s church] which brought forth the man child [Christ] And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the **remnant of her seed**, which (1) keep the commandments of God, and (2) have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”

[Revelation 19:10 defines the “testimony of Jesus Christ” as the “Spirit of Prophecy.”]

- All through the Bible (especially the OT), we find that the center of the great controversy (war) between Christ and Satan is among God’s people, His church.
 - Church is in apostasy or at least there is great apostasy in the church (Israel).
 - Israel rejects God’s ways and demands a king (1 Samuel 8)
 - Elijah (1 Kings 17 – 19)
 - All through the major and minor prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, Amos, etc.)
 - Time of John the Baptist
 - Time of Christ’s ministry on this earth
 - The great falling away apostasy during the Middle Ages (2 Thess. 2:3-4)

- The battle is most intense in God’s church. Satan’s master deceptions are reserved for God’s true church. Jesus warned His followers about this in Matt. 24:4, 24.
- Nevertheless, God’s church is the apple of His eye (Zechariah 2:8)
- Despite her faults, failings, and even apostasy, God’s church was and is still the repository of His oracles (Acts 7:38; Romans 3:2). “Oracles” = words of God or revelation of God.
- God’s true church, His remnant church, will survive and come off victorious in the end. The sinners in Zion (God’s church) will be sifted out during the shaking process. A pure church will be left in the very end. They will be fully prepared to meet Christ at the 2nd Coming. Ephesians 5:25-27.
- Seventh-day Adventists sincerely believe that they, along with all others who keep the commandments of God and have the faith of Jesus (Rev. 12:17), are God’s faithful remnant.

A Little History (the battle in God’s endtime church)

- The Charismatic style of worship is generally known for speaking in unknown tongues, healing, emphasis on emotional experience, subservience of the Bible to the voice of the “Holy Spirit,” lively, upbeat music, less emphasis on preaching or teaching.
- The Charismatic movement is found in virtually all churches (Catholic and Protestant).
- Three waves (according to Professor Peter Wagner of Fuller Theological Seminary):
 - First Wave: Pentecostal movement beginning in 1901.
 - Second Wave: Charismatic movement that began in the 1960s. Ties in with the Vatican II Council where it was decreed that the music, liturgy, and language of worship would be changed toward a “celebration” motif. The purpose being to try to join Catholics and Protestants (actually to bring Protestants back to the mother church).
 - Third Wave: Similar to the Second Wave but with less emphasis on tongues-speaking. This movement started in the early 1980s. It emphasizes “power evangelism,” healing, church growth, changing the worship liturgy (forms of worship), and church structure.

Characteristics of the Third Wave:

[Please note that in the following list of characteristics, not all of them will be present in every congregation. There is quite a wide variety of implementations of this movement. Also, many of these churches start out rather mild and then progress to more advanced levels over time. Nevertheless, it is quite easy to identify whether a church is part of this movement.]

- De-emphasis on denominational identity (downplay connection to a denomination)
- Go by the name of “Fellowship” or “Community Church” or some other generic and trendy name.
- More congregational (less ties to a conference organization)
- Innovative and creative changes in worship forms:
 - Upbeat, popular contemporary (more worldly) music
 - Audience usually stands while singing; singing led by a “praise team”
 - Use of drama, theatrical performances, skits
 - Clowns, puppets, balloons, colorful banners

- Dance, miming, very expressive sign language performed to music
- Use of overhead screens with words for singing instead of hymnals
- Applause and hand clapping and other forms of audience participation
- Less emphasis on preaching from the Word, more stories and interesting anecdotes during the message (sermon)
- A more casual, dressed-down atmosphere
- The idea is to be user-friendly, seeker-sensitive, and relevant to a society that is madly in love with itself, selfish, sophisticated, and proud.
- Change in theology towards an emphasis on love, forgiveness, and acceptance. These three things are good, of course, but they are emphasized in such a way as to take a soft stance on the yuppie, westernized lifestyle. There is little call to change, reform, or sacrifice. [Truly Satan has come as an angel of light.]
- There is a great deal of scorn, derision, and ridicule heaped on “traditional” churches as a way of attempting to show that the “contemporary” churches are a much “better” alternative for the modern seeker. For example, the following is quoted from a brochure distributed by a contemporary style congregation:
 - Top Ten Reasons Why People Don’t Go to Church:
 10. Can’t find a polyester leisure suit anywhere
 9. Relate to jazz and rock more than Handel and Bach
 8. Would rather sleep in own bed than in pew
 7. One word: hypocrites!
 6. Already served time as a child
 5. I gave at the office
 4. During organ music, start craving Dodger Dogs
 3. Can only remember three commandments
 2. Feel guilty enough already
 And the #1 reason people don’t go to church is...
 They haven’t been to _____ [church name] Fellowship!

While the above may sound cute and humorous to many, it doesn’t take much discernment to detect a rather bad attitude directed toward those who appreciate a more traditional, reverent worship service.

Mount Sinai Worship Service

One of the greatest examples of a contemporary, relevant, seeker-sensitive, innovative, dynamic, vibrant worship service is found at the foot of Mount Sinai. Exodus 32. This was the experience of the Golden Calf. Let’s describe some of the characteristics of this worship service:

- There was active, eager participation by nearly everyone.
- It met the people where they were.
- It met the people’s felt needs.
- There was plenty of giving in offerings (Ex. 32:3).
- At least some of the key church leadership approved (Aaron).
- They believed they were worshiping God (Ex 32:5 last part).
- There was eating, drinking, and the people rose up to play (Ex 32:6).

- The singing and praise service was vibrant, lively, upbeat. In fact, from a distance it sounded like war, but Moses recognized it as singing (Ex 32:17-18).
- The people were not dressed properly (Ex 32:25).
- In reaction, Moses threw down the Ten Commandments, breaking them in pieces which symbolized that the people had broken God's law.
- God was very displeased with His people. Judgments fell on them.

Moses called the people to a decision: Who is on the Lord's side? (Ex 32:26). We too are called to a decision today. Will we worship the true God in the way that He has instructed? Will we worship Him on the right *day* and in the right *way*? Worship is an important test in the Bible:

1. Sabbath day in Exodus 16:4 : "that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no."
2. Going against the culture of the day to faithfully worship the true God in Daniel 3.

Worship will be the test for God's people in the end of time (our day). "And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him [the beast], whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. If any man have an ear, let him hear." Revelation 13:8-9.

"Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." Revelation 14:12.

Worship in a Day of Atonement Setting

As we are living in earth's antitypical Day of Atonement, could it be that we can learn something about how we should be worshipping God based on how Israel of old worshiped on this most solemn day?

"And this shall be a statute for ever unto you: that in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, ye shall afflict your souls, and do no work at all, whether it be one of your own country, or a stranger that sojourneth among you: For on that day shall the priest make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, that ye may be clean from all your sins before the LORD. It shall be a sabbath of rest unto you, and ye shall afflict your souls, by a statute for ever." Leviticus 16:29-31.

Note that the Day of Atonement was not characterized by exuberant celebrations and upbeat music. This was a time of solemn soul searching; a time of cleansing and purification from sin; a time of judgment. What is our attitude today as we approach the end of time? Are we wanting to be pumped up with musical celebrations that have more in common with the world than with God's kingdom? Are we looking to Jesus for cleansing and forgiveness of sin so that we can live in the sight of a holy God?

From Daniel chapters 7, 8, and 9 we know we are living in God's judgment hour; the antitypical Day of Atonement. What is to be our mode of worship in this special and solemn time? No wonder that in the First Angel's message, it says to, "...Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters." Revelation 14:7.

But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer." 1 Peter 4:7.

Some Additional Comments

Now, we of course do not say that all the things described above as characteristics of the contemporary church movement are necessarily bad (meeting people where they are, meeting people's felt needs, etc.). But when this becomes the focus to the point that we compromise truth, then we have a problem. If the vehicle to convey the gospel distorts the gospel itself, we need to change the vehicle.

We do not condemn or judge anyone who finds themselves in one of these types of churches. There are many fine Christians whom God loves. Many of them are searching for how to best worship God. God has His true people everywhere. However, "... the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent." Acts 17:30.

One more thing. The "contemporary church movement" did not start up in a vacuum. There is a reason that it appeals to people. Traditional churches, sadly, are often asleep. We must admit to this and work to try to change this by God's grace. However, let's not make the medicine worse than the disease. Satan caused the traditional churches (most of them) to be sleepy, then he comes along with his "cure" – the "contemporary style" church. What a master deception. Could it be that God is about to pore out His Spirit in real power upon His faithful people? And that Satan is now desperately introducing his counterfeit just before God makes His move? Something to think about.

Let us make our worship services, dynamic, vibrant, alive, and growing (both in numbers and in spiritual maturity), but not by cranking up the volume on the amplifiers and introducing worldly music and methods. Instead, may our hearts be set on fire from God by allowing Him to convert and transform us, to enliven us, to put a new song in our hearts, to fill us with the joy of holiness. Then we can come alive, and have a vibrant, active, joyous, reverent, respectful worship that will be pleasing to God and result in a rich blessing for the worshipers. Then the counterfeit that Satan has introduced will be seen for what it is: a cheap second best. May God give us wisdom, discernment, and courage to follow His Word and to do those things that are pleasing in *His* sight.

[Starting on the next page are some texts and other resources that can serve as guiding principles in the area of music choices.]

Before we examine some biblical texts, we will need to define a few terms.

1. **Chord** — a group of three or more notes sounded at the same time. Chord relations make up the harmony (parts: soprano, alto, tenor, bass, etc.). Definition adapted from: Christine Ammer, *Harper's Dictionary of Music*, (New York: Barnes & Nobles Books, 1972).
2. **Consonance** — A musical interval or chord that sounds pleasant or seems restful and resolved. —*Harper's*.
3. **Dissonance** — A musical interval or chord that sounds harsh or unpleasant or seems restless and appears to call for resolution into a subsequent consonant chord. Discordant. —*Harper's*.
4. **Syncopation** — An effect of uneven rhythm that results from changing the normal pattern of accents and beats (such as emphasizing the off beat as opposed to the on beat). Several techniques are used to achieve syncopation in the voice part and/or in the accompaniment. Syncopation is basic to blues, ragtime, jazz, and rock, although it is found elsewhere as well. —*Harper's*.

CCM: Christian Contemporary Music. CCM is a special term used to refer to a particular style of music that emphasizes one or more of certain musical elements or characteristics. These characteristics include:

1. Off beat accents—emphasis placed on (usually) the second and fourth beats of a measure (in 4/4 timing) and are unrelated to the melody. This may be subtle and quite or it may be hard and driving.
2. A rhythm that conflicts with the melody.
3. Dissonance. Disharmonic chords that grate on the nerves.
4. Sliding or scooping—the voice or musical instrument “slides” from one note without break. Scooping is where a voice part lands briefly on a note that is just below the note that is written in the music, and then scoops up to the intended note. In some cases sliding and scooping present no problem, but if overemphasized it imparts a quality to the music that is sensual and uncertain.
5. Breathiness or gravelliness. Vocalists use this to impart a sentimental and sensual quality to their songs. Often used in CCM when singing a “love” song to Christ. Let’s cite an example to see the effects of this technique. Let’s say a husband and wife are sitting in the congregation listening to a young lady singing a CCM song in a breathy style. Now, let’s change the setting just slightly. What would happen if that young lady walked up to the husband and started talking in that same tone of voice to him? What would the wife do? She would likely slap the young lady (or at least have the urge to do so) and tell her a thing or two. We wouldn’t think of acting this way to someone else other than our spouse, etc. But what about a high and holy God? Is it appropriate to sing Him a sensual love song using the techniques of CCM? The overall style of typical softer CCM tends to cause the vocalists to sing in a manner that is somewhat breathy or otherwise sentimental in quality. On the other end of the CCM spectrum, the harder, more driving rhythms tend to cause the voice part to take on a hard edge.
6. Sensual vibrato. This technique is a slowed-down fluctuation in pitch of a note that is being held. It imparts a sensual quality to the music and is commonly found in jazz.

[We should state that not all the above should be always entirely absent from good music. There are times when a judicious use of dissonance or syncopation adds a little spice to the song. However, as in food preparations, a little spice goes a long ways. Over saturation, as is common in much of modern-style music, causes problems.]

The term “CCM” as usually understood is not the same as “contemporary music.” We often use these terms a little loosely. Contemporary music simply means the music that is being composed during the present era. Obviously, all music was contemporary at the time it was produced.

CCM is generally understood as a term that partakes of a particular style (it happens to be the style of today’s modern world). This style is characterized, more or less, by the description we provided above. CCM is a genre of music that partakes of the influence of rock music. Rock music is that music coming out of the rock n’ roll era that has its roots in blues, ragtime, jazz, and modern country & western and that is usually characterized by a “beat” that conflicts with (fights with) the melody.

Additional Bible Texts to Guide Us in Our Music Choices

Table 1. Bible Texts Applicable to Music Choices

Nu	Bible Text	Comments
1	“Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.” 1 Cor 10:31	Our worship and music should be to God’s glory, not any human. All aspects of our lives are for the purpose of drawing attention to our Creator; to glorify Him.
2	Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report, virtuous, praiseworthy ... think on these things. Phil 4:8	Our music should be of the highest quality (the best that we can do) and from a sincere heart. Music that partakes of sensual and sentimental qualities or that sends a confusing message should be shunned. All hint of worldliness should be avoided.
3	Our body is the temple of God. 1 Cor 6:19	<p>We should choose music that maintains a balanced appeal to the emotion and intellect and not just charm the senses. It should not harm the body, mind, or spirit in any manner. Thus, the volume of the music should not hurt the ears.</p> <p>The type of music should be such that it stimulates the mind in a positive way. Music should be avoided that accentuates a physical response, if that response is of a more sensual nature (e.g., appeals to the flesh). This would include an over emphasis on the beat along with a rhythm that conflicts with the melody (as is common in rock and most CCM).</p> <p>March music would not be included in the above. Even though it produces a physical response, it is not of a sensual nature.</p> <p>An over abundance of dissonant chord structures should be avoided as well.</p>
4	I will sing with the spirit and with the understanding. 1 Cor 14:15	<p>Our music and worship must be balanced with both the mind and the spirit; the intellectual as well as the spiritual. We should understand what we are listening to and have our minds engaged.</p> <p>The message in our Christian music should be clear and understandable.</p>
5	“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of	Much of the popular music of today’s world should be avoided. Why today’s world? Why is yesterday’s “worldly” music often better than today’s? Because, “iniquity shall abound” (Matt 24:12) and “as it was in the days of Lot” (Luke 17:28) and “as in

	God.” Rom 12:2	<p>the days that were before the flood” (Matt 24:38).</p> <p>Wickedness is increasing dramatically as we near the end. This slide in morality is shown in the artistic world, including that of music. It stands to reason that we need to be ever more mindful now than we have in the past about partaking of the popular musical styles around us.</p>
6	“For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?” 1 Cor 14:8	<p>The Bible calls for a certain, sure, distinct gospel message. It would follow that our music should partake of the same. Contemporary music influenced by jazz, rock, and related forms is anything but certain in its sound. There is slipping, sliding, emphasis on weak beats, conflicting back beats, discordant notes, and sentimental sounds.</p> <p>Let us make sure that our music sends a strong and “certain” sound along with the message of the words. The two should work in harmony and not conflict with each other. Tragically, much of CCM sends a dual, conflicting message between the words and the music.</p>
7	Walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit... Don’t be carnally minded. Rom 8:4-6	<p>Melody — Spirit (spiritual) Harmony — Mind (intellectual) Rhythm — Body (physical)</p> <p>If we subscribe to the above (as do many students of this subject), then we see that Godly music should not place emphasis on rhythm or other elements that result in an overly sensual (bodily) reaction.</p> <p>Furthermore, we note that the Christian battle is a fight between the flesh and the spirit. Only when we surrender the flesh to the Holy Spirit and allow Him to control our spirit do we then have harmony between our spirit, mind, and flesh. Taking this into the musical world, most CCM gives us the opposite. The carnal characteristics of the music conflict with the spiritual message of the words. The physical (sensual) side usually wins out.</p>
8	“Blessed are the peacemakers.” Matt 4:9	<p>Peace and harmony are a hallmark of God’s kingdom. Music that includes distortions of harmony, clashing rhythms, discordant structures, or conflicting lyrical and musical elements are not in God’s ideal.</p> <p>Unfortunately, much of CCM does not pass the test of being a peacemaker when we consider the disharmonic musical structure and conflicting message sent by the music and the words.</p>
9	Sing to the Lord a “new song.” A converted person “is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” Ps 91:1; 2 Cor 5:17.	<p>Many people have applied the “new song” injunction/invitation of the Bible to the new type of music that a newborn Christian will begin to enjoy.</p> <p>Additionally, this can be applied to the creativity and the production of fresh, new songs by a Christian. While this may be a good point, an equally valid and possibly a stronger point is that the newly converted Christian will discard his/her old musical tastes and learn to enjoy a whole new set of songs.</p>
10	“Wherefore come out from among	“The Christian will consider music such as blues, jazz, the rock

	them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing.” 2 Cor 6:17	idiom, and similar forms [most CCM] as inimical to the development of Christian character, because it opens the mind to impure thoughts and leads to unholy behavior [whether we realize it or not]. Such music has a distinct relationship to the permissiveness of contemporary society. The distortion of rhythm, melody, and harmony as employed by these styles and their excessive amplification dulls the sensibilities and eventually destroys the appreciation for that which is good and holy.”—GC Guidelines on Music (see below).
11	<p>“Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and <u>spiritual songs</u>, singing and making <u>melody</u> in your heart to the Lord.” Eph 5:19</p> <p>“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and <u>spiritual songs</u>, singing with grace in your hearts <u>to the Lord</u>.” Col 3:16</p>	<p>Christian music should feed the spirit, not the flesh. Certain worldly music styles (such as is prevalent in typical CCM) feeds the flesh.</p> <p>Note also the admonition to sing psalms and hymns. Note also that melody is mentioned. Also, our songs are to sung “to the Lord.”</p>
12	“Sing forth the honour of <u>his name</u> : make <u>his</u> praise glorious.” Ps 66:2	Christian music should emphasize the message, not the music, nor the musician.

The book of Psalms is an excellent guide for worship and music. Some have taken certain passages in the Psalms and wrested them to their own destruction (2 Peter 3:16) and have used them to justify the use of harmful and sensual music. However, if these certain limited passages in Psalms are rightly interpreted in the light of the rest of the Bible, there will be no need to be misguided in this area.

Our music should be harmonious, joyful, and uplifting. May God grant us intelligence and wisdom to make the choices that will be pleasing to Him.

Further Study Resources

For further study on this subject, please refer to the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists Guidelines Toward an SDA Philosophy of Music. They can be viewed online at the following link.

http://www.t3asda.org/articles/1972_Music_Guidelines_Text.htm

Also, an excellent collection of quotes from the writings of Ellen G. White on the subject of music is available from the E. G. White Estate at the following link.

<http://www.whiteestate.org/issues/music.html>